

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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P R 150358Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2128

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 6252

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: CODEL WOLFF: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK

SUMMARY: IN AUGUST 9 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK AT CHINHAE, SERIES OF QUESTIONS FROM CONGRESSMEN FOCUSSED LARGELY ON DEFENSE ISSUES AND ROK INTERNATIONAL POSITION. PRESIDENT WAS GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC ON LATER POINT, COMMENTING ON THIRD WORLD LEANINGS TOWARD COMMUNISM, "CHINA RUSH" NOW IN PROGRESS IN SE ASIA, AND CONCERN OVER IMPLIED POSSIBILITY OF U.S. DIRECT DEALING WITH DPRK. HE STRESSED NEED TO AVOID ANY ACTION WHICH WOULD CAUSE KIM IL SUNG TO MISCALCULATE U.S. OR ROK STRENGTH AND WILL TO RESIST AND LEAD TO NK ATTACK. HE SAID ROK WOULD NEED U.S. AIR, NAVAL, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT IN EVENT OF NK ATTACK WHICH NOT SUPPORTED BY USSR OR PRC AND STRESSED NEED TO RETAIN U.S. GROUND FORCES IN KOREA FOR DETERRENT EFFECT. HOWEVER, IN POINT NEW TO SUCH PRESENTATIONS, HE SAID IT HIS PERSONAL DESIRE THAT U.S. GROUND FORCES NOT BE INVOLVED IN EVENT OF HOSTILITIES, ALTHOUGH THIS ATTITUDE OF HIS SHOULD REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL LEST IT DESTROY DETERRENT EFFECT OF U.S. GROUND PRESENCE. HE ALSO EXPLAINED ROK INTENTION TO UPGRADE FORCES, USING FUNDS GENERATED BY NEWLY PASSED DEFENSE TAX LAW, TO POINT WHERE PERHAPS IN FIVE YEARS PRESENCE U.S. FORCES WOULD NOT BE REQUIRED. IN PRIVATE MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN WOLFF, HE INQUIRED IN DEPTH ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD ROK AND NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONGRESS AND EXECUTIVE. HE ASSURED WOLFF THAT KIM CHI HA WOULD NOT BE PUT TO DEATH.

1. AS EVIDENCE OF DEEP CONCERN KOREANS FEEL ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS SITUATION HERE, PRESIDENT PARK MADE EXTRAORDINARY GESTURE OF SENDING HIS PERSONAL AIRCRAFT TO SEOUL TO CONVEY ELEVEN CONGRESSMEN, TWO STAFF AIDES AND CHARGE TO CHINHAIE. PRESIDENT, WHO LEFT ISLAND VACATION RETREAT FOR OCCASION, DEVOTED OVER THREE AND ONE-HALF HOURS TO DISCUSSION, LUNCH, AND POST-LUNCH PRIVATE MEETING WITH CONGRESSMAN WOLFF.

2. IN DISCUSSION PERIOD, EACH CONGRESSMAN HAD OPPORTUNITY TO POSE QUESTIONS. CONGRESSMEN GILMAN, GUYLER, YATRON, AND DE LA GARZA DESCRIBED MISSION'S PURPOSE IN ESSENTIALLY FRIENDLY TERMS AS INQUIRY INTO CURRENT SITUATION TO ENHANCE PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF KEY CONGRESSMEN. ALL (ESPECIALLY DE LA GARZA) IMPLIED STRONG SUPPORT FOR ROK; NONE ASKED QUESTIONS. CONGRESSMAN MYERS ASKED INNOCUOUS QUESTION ON TRADE AND RECEIVED ANSWER IN SIMILAR VEIN.

3. CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ ASKED WHETHER PRESIDENT FELT NORTH KOREAN ATTACK IS LIKELY IN NEAR FUTURE AND, IF SO, WHETHER ROK WOULD HAVE CAPACITY TO REACT EFFECTIVELY WITH U.S. AIR, NAVAL, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT BUT WITHOUT PARTICIPATION U.S. GROUND FORCES. PRESIDENT RESPONDED THAT ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF NK COMMUNISTS REMAINS SAME AS IT WAS IN 1950. THEY PREPARED ATTACK AT ANY TIME; WHETHER THEY WILL DO SO, HOWEVER, DEPENDS ON KIM IL SUNG'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION. IF HE ASSESSES IT CORRECTLY, THERE WILL BE NO RECKLESS ATTACK; HOWEVER, IF HE MISCALCULATES THERE IS POSSIBILITY OF HOSTILITIES. PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ARE NOT FAVORABLE, FIRST BECAUSE THE KOREAN PEOPLE ARE FIRMLY UNITED IN THEIR DETERMINATION TO RESIST AGGRESSION AND WILL FIGHT TO VERY END, AND SECONDLY BECAUSE U.S. FORCES ARE HERE AND USG HAS CLEARLY REAFFIRMED ITS COMMITMENT TO ASSIST ROK TO DEFEND ITSELF. HOWEVER, THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT KIM IL SUNG COULD UNDER-ESTIMATE WILL OF KOREAN PEOPLE AND STRENGTH OF ROK FORCES. HE MIGHT ALSO MISCALCULATE IF HE HAD REASON TO QUESTION STRENGTH OF U.S. WILL TO SUPPORT ROK EFFORTS. IT VERY DIFFICULT TO CONCLUDE WITH CERTAINTY THAT HE WILL NOT ATTACK. THEREFORE, "WE" MUST BE FULLY PREPARED TO
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RESIST ATTACK AND TO AVOID ANY SIGNS OF VULNERABILITY, LEST THESE LEAD HIM TO MISCALCULATE.

4. WITH REGARD TO ROK CAPABILITIES TO RESIST ATTACK, PRESIDENT SAID ROK FORCES COULD SUCCESSFULLY DO SO WITH NAVAL, AIR, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FROM THE U.S. AND WITHOUT INTERVENTION OF U.S. GROUND FORCES, PROVIDING NORTH KOREA DID NOT RECEIVE HELP FROM THE SOVIET UNION OR COMMUNIST CHINA.

5. PRESIDENT THEN MADE POINT TO WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY ATTACHED CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE. HE SAID THAT IN EVENT OF WAR ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA, IT IS HIS PERSONAL WISH THAT U.S. GROUND FORCES NOT GET INVOLVED AND THAT AMERICAN BLOOD NOT BE SHED. HE

SAID HE HAD MADE THIS CLEAR ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO U.S. COMMANDERS. BUT AMERICAN GROUND FORCES MUST REMAIN BECAUSE THEIR PRESENCE SERVES AS MOST EFFECTIVE DETERRENT AGAINST OUTBREAK OF WAR AND MEANS OF PREVENTING KIM IL SUNG FROM MAKING MISCALCULATION. IT WOULD NOT BE WISE TO LEAD NORTH KOREANS TO THINK NEITHER U.S. NOR ROK WISHED U.S. GROUND FORCES TO BE INVOLVED. IF THEY KNEW THIS, THEY MIGHT MAKE SERIOUS MISCALCULATION. FOR THIS REASON HE ASKED THAT CONGRESSMEN TREAT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD NONUSE OF U.S. GROUND FORCES AS CONFIDENTIAL. HE CONCLUDED BY STRESSING THAT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ROK WOULD NEED U.S. LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND WOULD REQUIRE ASSISTANCE FROM U.S. AIR AND NAVAL FORCES.

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6. CONGRESSMAN BADILLO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER ASIAN POLITICAL SITUATION IN POST-VIETNAM ERA AND NOTED PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT THAT ROK WOULD REQUIRE U.S. AIR, NAVAL, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT IN EVENT OF ATTACK. HE ASKED WHAT STEPS WERE BEING TAKEN TO ELIMINATE NEED FOR U.S. FORCES PARTICIPATION AND HOW LONG PRESENCE WOULD BE REQUIRED HERE. PRESIDENT RESPONDED THAT DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN BASED ON PREMISE OF NORTH KOREAN ATTACK WITHOUT SOVIET AND COMMUNIST CHINA ASSISTANCE. HE DID NOT THINK U.S. FORCES SHOULD STAY IN ROK FOREVER AND HE DID NOT WANT THEM TO. IF ROK DEVELOPS ITS OWN CAPABILITIES FULLY, IT MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO REPEL ATTACK WITHOUT EVEN U.S. AIR OR NAVAL SUPPORT. ROK MILITARY COMMANDERS, IN CONSULTATION WITH U.S. COUNTERPARTS, HAVE BEEN STUDYING MEANS TO STRENGTHEN ROK ARMED FORCES. THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED OVERALL PLAN BASED ON COMPLETION OF FIVE-YEAR MODERNIZATION PROGRAM TO WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON COMMITTED U.S. UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, ROKG HAS CONCLUDED THIS EFFORT IS INADEQUATE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS THEREFORE ENACTED NEW DEFENSE TAX BILL UNDER WHICH, BEGINNING NEXT YEAR, ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF NATIONAL REVENUES (SIC) WILL BE DEVOTED TO DEFENSE PURPOSES. ROK IS WORKING

ON ASSUMPTION IT MUST ASSUME BURDEN OF ITS OWN DEFENSE AND THAT U.S. CANNOT SUPPLY ALL ROK NEEDS. IF PLAN PROCEEDS SMOOTHLY FOR NEXT FIVE YEARS, ROK MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO WITHOUT U.S. FORCES.

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7. CONGRESSMAN CLANCY ASKED PRESIDENT'S VIEW ON U.S. VETO OF UN MEMBERSHIP FOR TWO VIETNAMS. PRESIDENT SAID HE THOUGH U.S. DECISION WAS WISE; ROK IS FULLY ENTITLED TO UN MEMBERSHIP AND IS BETTER QUALIFIED THAN EITHER VIETNAM. NORTH VIETNAM, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD GROSSLY VIOLATED UN CHARTER AND PARIS ACCORDS BY SEIZING SOUTH VIETNAM BY FORCE. ROK FULLY ABIDES BY UN CHARTER AND HAS NEVER QUESTIONED UN ROLE AS PEACE-KEEPING AGENCY. THEREFORE, IF ROK DENIED UN ENTRY, TWO VIETNAMS MUST ALSO BE DENIED. IF UN MEMBERSHIP CANNOT RECOGNIZE THIS LOGIC, UN ITSELF WILL FACE SERIOUS SETBACK IN PRESTIGE AS PEACE-KEEPING AGENCY.

8. CONGRESSMAN MINETA NOTED GROWING INTEREST OF INDONESIA AND PHILIPPINES IN REGIONALISM, ASKED WHETHER KOREA WOULD BE MAKING A GREATER EFFORT IN THIRD WORLD. HE ALSO ASKED WHETHER DETENTE HAD BEEN ADVANTAGEOUS TO ROK. PRESIDENT CITED DIFFICULTIES ROK HAS ENCOUNTERED IN DEALING WITH OR EXERTING INFLUENCE ON THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES, MOST OF WHOM APPEAR TO SIDE WITH COMMUNISM. HE GLOOMILY CITED PROSPECT THAT NORTH KOREA WILL GAIN PREFERENTIAL POSITION OVER ROK AT FORTHCOMING LIMA NONALIGNED MEETING. AS TO SOUTHEAST ASIA, NATIONS SUCH AS THAILAND AND THE PHILIPPINES, WHICH HAD ENTIRELY DEPENDED ON U.S. FOR SECURITY, NOW FEEL IT NOT SAFE TO DO SO IN AFTERMATH OF VIETNAM. THESE NATIONS ARE THEREFORE NOW ENGAGING IN A "CHINA RUSH." THE ROK MAINTAINS FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIANS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO, BUT MUST BE CAUTIOUS IN LIGHT OF THEIR CHANGING ATTITUDES.

9. PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD GIVEN MUCH CONSIDERATION TO EFFECT OF DETENTE ON SMALLER NATIONS LIKE KOREA. DISADVANTAGES ARE OBVIOUS; AFTER U.S./CHICOM RAPPROCHEMENT, JAPAN MOVED QUICKLY TO ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIP WITH PEKING AT EXPENSE OF ROK. KOREANS ARE VERY APPREHENSIVE LEST SAME THING HAPPEN HERE. (NOTE: HE WAS NOT EXPLICIT, BUT CONTEXT CLEARLY REFLECTED CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE U.S. DEALINGS WITH NORTH.) TO ILLUSTRATE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON SMALL NATIONS OF ANY DEALINGS BETWEEN SUPER POWERS, HE OFFERED OLD KOREAN SAYING: "IF TWO ELEPHANTS MAKE LOVE, GRASS BENEATH THEM SUFFERS; IF TWO ELEPHANTS FIGHT, GRASS ALSO SUFFERS."

10. CONGRESSMAN SIMON, REMARKING THAT ROBERT NATHAN HAD DESCRIBED PRESIDENT AS ECONOMIC GENIUS, ASKED HOW SERIOUS
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EFFECT OF PETROLEUM CRISIS HAD BEEN ON ROK AND HOW U.S. COULD HELP. PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT U.S. HAD BEEN HELPFUL. ROK, LIKE MANY COUNTRIES, HAD BEEN VERY SERIOUSLY HURT IN BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS TERMS, BUT HAD BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE MOST DIFFICULT PERIOD. IF THERE NO FUTURE CRISIS, PRESIDENT THOUGHT ROK ECONOMY WOULD BE ABLE TO RECOVER FULLY.

11. CONVERSATION IN GARDEN FOR PRE-LUNCHEON DRINKS GAVE INDIVIDUAL CONGRESSMEN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK SEMI-PRIVATELY TO PRESIDENT. SEVERAL (SOLARZ AND BADILLO) EXPRESSED CONCERN ON HUMAN-RIGHTS ISSUE AND EFFECT IT HAS ON U.S. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ROKG.

12. LUNCHEON DISCUSSION WAS LARGELY SOCIAL AND ANECDOTAL. FOLLOWING LUNCHEON, CONGRESSMAN WOLFF REMAINED FOR LENGTHY PRIVATE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT WHILE OTHER U.S. AND ROK ATTENDEES (FONMIN AND CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY) WENT OUTSIDE. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF LATER INFORMED CHARGE THAT PRESIDENT HAD ASKED FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATION PRIMARILY TO QUERY HIM IN DEPTH ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ROK PROBLEMS, NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONGRESS AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH, AND STRENGTH OF U.S. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR KOREA. WOLFF SAID THAT HE HAD SPOKEN FRANKLY TO PRESIDENT ABOUT MANNER IN WHICH HUMAN-RIGHTS ISSUE HERE AFFECTS CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES. HE SAID PRESIDENT HAD ASSURED HIM THAT KIM CHI HA, WHILE HE MIGHT BE CONVICTED, WOULD NOT RECEIVE DEATH SENTENCE AND THAT IF HE DID, PRESIDENT WOULD COMMUTE SENTENCE.

13. COMMENT: PRESIDENT WAS FORTHCOMING THROUGHOUT AND, OBVIOUSLY RESTED FROM TWO-WEEK VACATION, BETRAYED NONE OF NERVOUSNESS WHICH FREQUENTLY CHARACTERIZES HIS MEETINGS WITH POTENTIAL CRITICS. EVEN CONGRESSMEN INCLINED TO BE CRITICAL OF HIS DOMESTIC POLICIES WERE IMPRESSED BY HIS OPEN INVITATION TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS, WHICH WERE EXPRESSED, WHEN EXPRESSED AT ALL, IN MUTED TERMS.
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